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TWENTY QUESTIONS on

FILMSTRIPS

In School and Parish

By G. L. WHEELER

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TWENTY QUESTIONS
ON
FILMSTRIPS
(In School and Parish)

ANSWERED BY

G. L. WHEELER

Vicar of Thornton-le-Fylde, Lancs.

Secretary of the C. of E. Films Commission (Northern Province)

A. R. MOWBRAY & Co. Limited

London and Oxford

First published in 1950

Printed in Great Britain by
A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, London and Oxford
0281

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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PROLOGUE

THE CASE FOR VISUAL AIDS

'The ear is a less trustworthy witness than the eye.'

Herodotus, 'History.'

'A thing when heard, remember, strikes less keen
On the spectator's mind than when 'tis seen.'

Horace, 'Ars Poetica.'

'One eye-witness is better than ten hearsay witnesses.
Those who see know beyond a doubt.'

Plautus, 'Truculentes.'

'One picture is worth 10,000 words.'

Chinese Proverb.

'One in the eye is worth three on the ear.'

Army Bureau of Current Affairs.

1. *What is a filmstrip?*

A length of non-inflammable 35 mm. film containing on average about 40 pictures. The pictures are in two sizes: 24 × 36 mm. (Double Frame) or 24 × 18 mm. (Single Frame). Single frame pictures are at right angles to the length of the strip, double frame are parallel to the length. To show both sizes on the same projector it must have a rotating-head: this device allows the film-carrying mechanism to be turned round without disturbing the rest of the projector, which must remain upright at all times.

Advantages

Smooth projection: a rapid succession of pictures can be shown.

Portability: an average strip will fit into the waistcoat pocket. A 30 ft. strip weighs only 2 oz. and yet has some 480 pictures on it.

Cheapness: filmstrip prices range from around 5*s*.

Simplicity: pictures cannot appear in the wrong order or upside down.

Durability: unlike glass slides, filmstrips do not break.

Disadvantages

Filmstrips are easily scratched.

The picture sequence cannot be changed.

2. *What is a filmstrip lantern?*

In principle it is like the magic lantern, but it projects filmstrips instead of the usual glass slides. Filmstrip lanterns are compact, light in weight, and easy to operate. Some lanterns have a 'click-feed' for changing the pictures rapidly; it is a refinement of doubtful value. Lanterns can be operated from a 12-volt car battery or at varied voltages (A.C. or D.C.) up to 250 volts.

In order to use the same lantern on various voltages a resistance or a transformer will be necessary; alternatively the lamp can be changed.

The power of the projection lamps can range from 24 up to 500 watts. Low voltage lamps give more light for their wattage than lamps of a similar wattage operated on a higher voltage. The useful lens sizes are 4 in. and 6 in., though a 2 in. lens is usually necessary for rear-projection.

Sometimes a reduction in the purchase price of a lantern is effected at the expense of the optical system. Cheap lenses result in a screen picture clear at the centre but blurred or fuzzy at the edges. 'Bloomed' lenses are an advantage, for instead of 50 per cent of the light reaching the screen, as with the normal lens, no less than 85 per cent is secured.

Modern 2 in. glass lantern slides can be shown on most types of filmstrip lanterns, by use of a slide adaptor.

3. *What is the value of the 2 in. lantern slide?*

It overcomes most of the disadvantages of the filmstrip. The picture sequence can be changed. The best possible photographic results are obtained because each slide is processed individually, not *en bloc* like the pictures on a filmstrip with a view to the best average result. The actual picture size on a 2 in. slide is 36 mm. × 24 mm. Slides can get lost, get out of order, and can appear upside down on the screen. They are less likely to break than the old $3\frac{1}{4}$ in. lantern slides and they are far less bulky, though they take up more space than a filmstrip. The individual frames on a filmstrip can be mounted and made into 2 in. slides.

4. *Can filmstrips be shown on a magic lantern?*

It is possible to make an adaptor to fit a magic lantern, but this is not recommended. There is a considerable loss of light, coupled with the constant risk from the heat, which may damage a strip or buckle it, thus throwing the screen picture out of focus.

5. *What is the best type of screen?*

For long narrow halls, where the audience will be seated directly in front of the screen, either a beaded or a silver screen will give the best results.

For a wide hall, where many of the audience will

have to view the screen from an angle, a white opaque screen will give the best overall results.

For portability the screen should be of the 'box' type.

For rear-projection a transparent screen is necessary.

There is a useful rear-projection unit on the market and with this the teacher operates the lantern from the side of the screen. The teacher thus has full control of the lantern and the class. For deaf and dumb audiences this is of special value, as they can read the teacher's lips. Black-out is not essential, only controlled daylight: this means that the screen is shaded or protected from direct light.

6. *How can the screen picture size be determined?*

The screen picture can be changed in size in two ways:

(*a*) By moving the projector nearer the screen a smaller picture is obtained. As the projector is moved away from the screen the picture increases.

(*b*) By keeping both projector and screen in the same position and by using different sizes of lens. The longer the focal length of the lens the smaller the picture.

The following approximate formula is useful:

$$\left.\begin{matrix}\text{Distance of}\\ \text{Projector}\\ \text{from the}\\ \text{Screen}\end{matrix}\right\} = \text{Size of Screen} \times \frac{\text{Focal length of lens}}{\text{Size of the original}}$$

Screen Table

Size of Screen	*2″ Lens*	*4″ Lens*	*6″ Lens*
	Distance of projector from screen		
3′ 4″ × 3′ 4″	4′	9′	14′
4′ 4″ × 3′ 4″	6′	12′	17½′
5′ × 3′ 9″	7′	13½′	20½′
8′ × 6′	11′	21½′	32½′
10′ × 10′	13½′	28′	40½′
12′ × 12′	16′	32′	48½′
3′ 4″ × 3′ 4″	7′	13½′	20½′
4′ 4″ × 3′ 4″	9′	17½′	27½′
5′ × 3′ 9″	10′	20′	30½′
8′ × 6′	16′	32′	48½′
10′ × 10′	20′	40′	60′
12′ × 12′	24′	48′	72′

7. *Is filmstrip work expensive?*

Filmstrip projectors range in price from around £12. Some of these low-priced projectors are adequate for small audiences. For general purposes a good projector will cost about £26. The optical systems of these lanterns are good. Expert advice should be sought before buying. Some projectors give good optical results but soon overheat, and this can be a serious drawback.

Filmstrips cost from 5*s*. to 15*s*., according to length and other factors. Costs of material can be reduced if schools or parishes co-operate in establishing a library of filmstrips.

A spare projection lamp should always be on hand, and if possible a spare lens of different focal length.

8. *Is there a good supply of filmstrips, and how should they be selected?*

In addition to religious subjects filmstrips are available on the following: Art, Biographies, Cinema, Civics, Drama, Economics, Health and Hygiene, History, Social History, The Home, Industry and Labour, Literature, Music and Ballet, Nature Study, Polar Expeditions, Science and Invention, Social Services and World Affairs. There is a very wide range of travel and geographic strips.

Selection should not be made at random from suppliers' catalogues. Mowbrays publish a list of useful religious filmstrips.

9. *How should I buy filmstrip equipment?*

There are several agencies which have Visual Aid Departments (for example, Mowbrays) which are ready to give advice on all aspects of the work. To consult them is to save time—and money. Experience can be dearly bought.

When writing for advice give a concise summary of the important information:

(*a*) The supply of electric current. Whether it is from the mains (if so, is it A.C. or D.C. and what is the voltage).

(*b*) Do you want to use the projector on a variety of electric currents, or even in a hall where there is no electrical supply?

(*c*) The size of the proposed audiences. (This is necessary in determining the power of the projection lamp and the size of the screen.)

(*d*) The size of the hall, or the length of the throw from the projector to the screen. (From this information can be determined the size of lenses you will require).

(*e*) How much money can you afford to spend?

10. *How should the hall be set out for filmstrip projection?*

The lantern should be behind the audience. The screen height should allow every one to see in comfort. Picture size should not be less than one-ninth the distance from the screen to the farthest seats. Distance from screen to front seats should not be less than two and a half times the width of the screen. The angle of vision from the top of the picture to the front seats should not exceed thirty-fivedegrees.

Make sure all electric cables are where the audience cannot trip over them. If the hall is blacked out

the hall lights should be lowered or raised gradually. A flashlight should be on hand to show latecomers to their seats or to deal with emergencies. If a loud-speaker is used this should be by or beneath the screen, just above the head level of the audience.

11. *Is it necessary to have an assistant?*

Generally speaking an assistant is not necessary, but the lecturer is better freed from all other activities if this can be arranged. Quite young people can be trained to operate a filmstrip projector. For religious services it is better to work from a script, or so to rehearse the lecture together that verbal instructions are not necessary. Sometimes a small pilot light by the projector, worked by the lecturer to indicate changes of picture, is a good idea, providing the audience cannot see it.

If one wants to delete certain frames from a film-strip, or to indicate the passage of time, or to prevent a jump from one picture to another of different character, this can be done by a simple fade-out. The hand, with fingers parted, is slid a few inches in front of the projection lens until the palm of the hand cuts off all light, and a smooth fade-out will result. Fade-in the reverse way. During the fade-out the projectionist turns to the next picture that is needed and fades-in at the right moment.

12. *Can filmstrips be made from my own material?*

There are several firms providing this service quite cheaply. In the case of illustrations from books, permission to reproduce the picture must be obtained from the owners of the copyright.

The following extract from a British Film Institute statement should be noted: 'If a person were to use an epidiascope to throw on the screen in front of his class an illustration from a copyright book there would be no infringement; but if he were to make a filmslide [or filmstrip] of the illustration for use in the same way he would be infringing copyright. . . .'

13. *Can filmstrips be used in conjunction with a film?*

Many would say that this represents the ideal. The teacher can either show the film first and thus impart the film idea as a whole, and then break it down—just as the original film idea was broken down into a series of 'shots' in the shooting script. Or the teacher can first build up the idea, by using the film strip, and finally show the film, thus incorporating and co-ordinating the previous instruction. Those wishing to use the film and filmstrip might well start with the film series 'Two Thousand Years Ago' and the filmstrips based on the five films in this series. Pitmans publish an excellent book of the same title (6*s*.), containing valuable information and the commentary on the films.

14. *Can the filmstrip be used for a 'picture quiz'?*

For this purpose individual slides are more adaptable, but filmstrips can be used, especially if unwanted frames are faded out (Question 11).

Recently we conducted a quiz on the filmstrip 'How to Look at a Town' (Ely) by Common Ground. We made use of every frame, drawing spiritual lessons from each.

The general view of the cathedral, with the buildings clustered round it, was our starting-point. The following points were made: This symbolizes the place God should have in every life—at the very centre and pervading the whole. Some people are like Durham, where the cathedral stands aloof from the daily life of the town. Others are like Manchester, where the cathedral is overshadowed by the city, by commerce and industry. So God is overshadowed and crowded out of many a life.

Every frame was so used, even the jam works and the beet factory along with the gasworks: these were used to lead the discussion to the offertory at Holy Communion.

15. *Can you supply some useful addresses of filmstrip makers?*

British Industrial Films Ltd., 177 The Vale, Acton, London, W.3.

Common Ground Ltd., 1a Sydney Place, London, S.W.7.

Dufay-Chromex Ltd., 14-16 Cockspur Street, London, N.W.8.

Kay's Carlton Hall Studios, 72a Carlton Hill, London, N.W.8.

Newton & Co., 72 Wigmore Street, London, W.1,

Spectrocolour Ltd., 89 Wardour Street, London, W.1.

Visual Information Service, 168a Battersea Bridge Road, London, S.W.11.

Wallace Heaton Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, London, W.1.

16. *Can filmstrips be used for a devotional service?*

Yes—providing the service has been well devised, well rehearsed, and is well conducted. Projection and presentation must be flawless. A machine with a click-feed would prove distracting.

Great care must be exercised in the choice of visuals and in the writing of the commentary.

As an illustration of the possibilities: for the visuals use 'The Stories of the Apostles' (Visual Information Service) up to and including the Crucifixion. A reading from *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis should then be selected for each picture. For picture number four, 'The Disciple whom Jesus loved,' the following reading:

'Blessed is he that understandeth what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for Jesus' sake. Thou oughtest to leave thy beloved, for thy Beloved; for that Jesus will be loved alone above all things.

The love of created things is deceitful and inconstant; the love of a creature shall fall with that which is subject to fall; he that embraceth Jesus shall be made strong for ever. Love Him, and keep Him for thy friend, Who, when all go away, will not forsake thee, nor suffer thee to perish in the end. Some time or other thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or no. Keep close to Jesus both in life and in death, and commit thyself unto His faithfulness, Who, when all fail, can alone help thee.'

17. *Can filmstrip work be linked with dramatic work?*

For this kind of work filmstrips *without* captions are necessary. There are two ways of approach: (*a*) To find suitable visuals for a dramatic work or (*b*) to prepare a dramatized treatment for a filmstrip.

For 'Pilgrim's Progress' (Newtons or Visual Information) we wrote a script for six voices. For 'Faith Triumphant—An Episode in the Life of St. Paul' (Religious Films Ltd.) thirty-eight voices were used, and a chorus. The main actors were grouped near or behind the screen. The chorus was in a gallery *behind* the audience. We did our own dramatization of the Bible story.

This type of production can be adapted to almost any number of voices and can be attempted by village congregations. People unaccustomed to stage work and who would be nervous before footlights can often do this work very well. Contrasting voices are essential. Carefully prepared scripts and the grouping of the voices call for every attention.

18. *Can music be used with filmstrips?*

Music can be used with great effect. As with the sound film, or the ballet, music should be subsidiary to the visuals. The music must be kept in its right place and never used just for the sake of using it. Beware the amateur who thinks that every pause should be filled with music, or the one who usually plays the music much too loud. Recorded music, if well chosen and well reproduced, can be of great value—and often provides opportunity for some music lover to put his skill and interest to the service of the Church.

For 'Faith Triumphant' we used organ music based on the theme of the Hebrew melody for Hymn 601 *A. & M.* ('The God of Abraham praise') and also a recording of the 'Trumpet Voluntary.'

19. *What is a sound-filmstrip?*

The commentary is recorded on gramophone records and the visuals are shown in the normal way on the filmstrip projector. Synchronization is easy as the projectionist has a script and is ready for each change of picture as it comes along. When the commentary for one picture is finished there is either a signal given on the record or there is a brief pause.

The sound-filmstrip is of use where a set lecture is preferred to the live commentary of the teacher, or where it is difficult to find a suitable lecturer. For

the purpose of the recording the script is usually written by an expert and the commentary is spoken by a professional announcer or elocutionist.

At the moment the technique of the sound-filmstrip is virtually untried in this country.

20. *Can you suggest a few further books on filmstrips?*

Beale. *Look and See.* Visual Aids in the service of the Church. Edinburgh House Press, 2 Eaton Gate, S.W.1.

Dale. *Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching.* Harrap, London.

Dance. *An Introduction to Filmstrips.* Harrap, London.

Truby and Dory. *Visual Aid Year Book.* Daily Mail School-Aid Department, New Carmelite House, London, E.C.4.

Publications of the British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.1.

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